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## AN ART SCHOOL.



LET the extension and perfection of art schools be responsible for the artistic development of the next generation! The State is doing nothing looking towards any higher education than that provided by the public schools; examples are not accu-

mulated in museums or galleries where they may serve as instructors to those who desire to learn; nothing is being done by the country as a whole to encourage the study in the practice of art. Private enterprise, however, has supplied the want left open by the public purse, and private capital has established art colleges, equipped with the paraphernalia necessary in the studies, and provided with competent and careful instructors.

These art schools have increased in numbers and advantages as they have been demanded by the growing taste of the people, until some of them have to-day reached a degree of perfection that places them on a par, so far as practical results are concerned, with the schools of Europe.

Some of them, of course, are more noticeable than others, either for the progress they have made or the superior advantages they offer; they may have a system that advances their students more rapidly than the systems pursued by their competitors. This is marked in the St. John's Art School, which has one of the upper flats in the Rensselaer, looking up Sixth Avenue from Thirty-second Street, and flooded with a north light so dear to the artist. The completeness in detail of this school takes in every phase of drawing and painting, and takes in every ability from the beginner, who sits in the room devoted to casts and employs her day in transferring to paper the classic head of a plaster Medusa, or striving to give the proper rotundity to a sphere, from this learner to the finished artist, who wishes to improve her work by a few more suggestions from a teacher, who is qualified to give them. They attend here until they are resigned to the criticism of the world to be applauded or ignored, as their talents or their fortune may demand.

There are several departments in the school, beginning with that devoted to the reception of absolute novices, where, as we have said, drawing from the cast is done, through to an adjoining apartment where the lay figures are occasionally draped as nature might be, and thence into the higher class where a model is employed.

All under the supervision and instruction of Mr. J. Wells Champney, who is so well known as an artist and teacher that we need say nothing concerning his capacity. Aside from the fact that the very best tuition is given by the very best tutor and talent is developed, if talent exists, there is the fact that the young ladies who attend (and it is only for ladies) may board at the St. John's School near by the Art School, where they will be under the best protection and associated with the most desirable companions.

## A FASCINATING AND QUIANT STUDIO AND WORKSHOPS.

IT is seldom that we see anything unique, even in our great metropolis. There are vast collections of common things. Raw mediocrity is everywhere conspicuous, and everybody notices the restless modernism of our homes, shops, restaurants and amusement halls.

The flavor of age is generally absent; the ripeness of inherited possessions and the deposits of a past time are rarely met with. The modern store with its garish newness and spluttering electric light is a reservoir of brilliancy and novelty, but how rare is it to find a rambling interior of large proportions with wandering corridors and dusty corners. Not often are the possessions of one generation preserved by the next. In the busy and reckless get-on-a-tive-ness that seems to goad every modern existence, we scatter what our fathers wrought and reach out feverishly for the next invention. However, in spite of all this unrest and yearning for new things, we find ourselves constantly going back to the past for models and examples which the wisdom of the ages has stored for our instruction. Especially is this true of art in all its applications, and the purpose of this article is to introduce the reader into the quaint establishment of William Gibson's Sons, and let him enjoy a glimpse of the strange and characteristic collection there to be found.

The parent house was established in 1833, and,

although the founder died some years ago, the business has been continued by his natural successors till the present time. Around an open court which extends upward through three stories, are galleries filled with curios and striking objects; side rooms branching off in different directions have been converted into studios, and others still are fairly choking with the accumulations of artistic endeavors. The principal business of this house has always been the manufacture of stained glass in all its forms, and growing out of that and supplementary to it, has been introduced a line of architectural decorations for the enrichment of public and private buildings. The various show-rooms have become receptacles for glass work of every period from the thirteenth century to the present. The sun's rays glint and pierce through hundreds of multi-colored panes, sparkling jewels, and rare glass paintings, and throw a diversity of shades over casts, statuary and bronzes that are scattered about in delightful confusion. Old cathedral windows in original and serious patterns hang by the side of the fac-similes of dainty flowers; the scene of the nativity and specimens of modern portraiture are in contrast, and the best Berlin work, and the latest Yankee invention invite a comparison. "The hands that made many of these are now lying in their graves," said the present proprietor, "and I preserve them faithfully." There are suits of mail, trophy pieces, fantastic carvings, figures and busts in metal, plaster and wood, weird brackets and natural-wood frames, reproductions of bas-reliefs, panels, pedestals, columns and vases; ceiling flowers and center-pieces, medallions, corners and ceramics, art objects, and delicate modelings, showing the subtle touch of the finished artist. The galleries—at the sides, overhead, and massed at central points—are so filled as to allow but narrow channels for the passage of persons. A bewildering variety of beautiful articles, gleaming with color and shade, make the views from any direction a pleasure and surprise, and prove the wide range of the firm's work. In inner apartments are ceramics and curios from every clime, Florentine and Oriental vases and plaques, Chinese pottery, Wedgwood ware and mementoes and memorials of hidden centuries.

Having shaken the mummified hand of an Egyptian lady, and handled the ashes of a human being cremated many hundred years ago, we departed from this interesting place alive to its comprehensive beauty and desiring to recommend it to all whose taste and interests lie in artistic paths. The revival of medieval decorative art with all its breadth and richness has stimulated the business of this house into greater activity, and their wide facilities for work providing means for the accomplishment of every artistic step (from model to finished article) under one roof, have gained for them large confidence and patronage.

## A SUBSTITUTE FOR PLASTER.

THE ornamental finish of the walls and ceilings of rooms and interiors have attracted the attention of our best artists, and a succession of experiments have produced many different materials to be applied in various ways. In opera-houses, theatres, public buildings and private houses of the best class, the use of plaster has been almost entirely done away with. It was objectionable on account of its weight and liability to crack or become damaged.

Every one knows how quickly a little water will disintegrate plaster material and cause it to loosen its hold, and how frequent are accidents of that kind.

The difficulty and trouble necessary in making repairs were further reasons why a substitute should if possible be found. Neither a delicate design, nor objects in high relief can be reproduced in plaster. A new and improved material known as fibrous-stone composition has lately been quite extensively used in the Fifth Avenue Hotel, Wallack's Theatre and the private residences of many wealthy gentlemen, upon ceilings and walls, as well as in the ornamental finish of panels, plasters and cornices. It has a fibrous foundation, is extremely hard, and can be cut, sawed, filed and nailed like wood. There is never any danger of its being displaced by sudden jars, or cracking and tumbling down.

In case of fire it is incombustible—not lending its aid like lath to the conflagration—merely charring into a black stony substance. It is as hard as iron and has really the strength of metal without its weight.

The most esteemed value of this material for decorative purposes is the high artistic character of the work. A model in plaster is first made, the

excellence of which depends on the talent of the artist. From this original model a faithful and exact fac-simile is reproduced, which is sharp, clean and with the lightness and grace of superior hand-work. It has a close texture, smooth surface, and can be at once put up without the aid of lath and plaster, and is all ready to receive paint, or metallic finish.

Neither heat nor cold will warp or shrink it and no change of atmosphere will affect it, therefore it is applicable for exterior as well as interior finish.

The combination of lightness and strength is a feature of value; great fluted pillars and deep theatre cornices are furnished in sectional parts and handled with ease.

Those charmingly developed figures of heroic size, which we have noticed as posing in graceful attitudes above the stage curtain, and those other obliging females who kindly officiate as perpetual candelabra are hardly more weighty than an orphan child. In construction and manipulation, such practical advantages are easily understood. On the other hand, the delicate tracery of a hand-carved picture frame is reproduced with faithful accuracy, and the dainty, high-bred wall ornamentation of the Louis XVI. period is made with absolute exactness of detail and finish.

## FLOWERS AS DECORATION.

FLOWERS can be made as tasteful a decoration as tapestries or any other beautiful things. At the same time, though the assertion seems to be placed in doubt by common practice, they can be used untastefully. A room literally loaded with blossoms is not decorated in good taste, despite their intrinsic beauty and grateful perfume, for there can be an embarrassment of riches; and, besides, one does not wish too much concealing of solid textures, even by flowers. It is always best to use flowers as nearly as possible in their natural state; that is, with stems and leaves showing. Freshly cut flowers in glass jars or vases, with their long stems showing through the water, and their green leaves interposing their grateful color among the petals, are more agreeable to the eye than closely bunched bouquets wound with string and compacted with tin foil. Set pieces, like some of the pretentious and complicated floral allegories built for Gen. Grant's funeral are in questionable taste. The perishable nature of organic things is as well suggested at a funeral by simple chaplets and bunches of flowers as it is by gates, columns, monuments, gravestones, harps and bibles; and the beauty of young life is as agreeably suggested at weddings and christenings and parties by rich masses of flowers, baskets of freshly gathered roses and lilies, and potted flowers and plants, as by tortured looking devices of harps, hearts, vases and cradles. Those things are attempted with a view to diverting attention from the real beauty of the flowers to the alleged beauty of the design, and, owing to the nature of the materials, the beauty of the design must always remain an allegation. It is bad art to use any material for a purpose, no matter how ornamental, to which it is not adapted. Clay makes good vases, but poor flowers. Kid and morocco, *per contra*, are serviceable for gloves and book bindings, but not for satchels and boots. Flowers are sufficient unto themselves without the adventitious assistance of the florist.

Flowers are always agreeable on the table. A pot of them in bloom can be set in the center, or a celery glass may be filled with them. Some attempt should be made, particularly on company occasions, to harmonize them with the setting of the table. If the latter be dressed with white china, white table cloth, clear glass and polished silver, what can be more appropriate than white roses, light chrysanthemums—a decorative flower—or a big bunch of daisies (with the plant lice washed off)? If a red or pink cloth be laid, and red or amber glasses, and red bordered porcelain set before each guest, red roses are the flowers to use. A table thus set, with a shaded candle at each plate, is a pretty sight. The humblest table can be made beautiful in this way at a modicum of expense. Wax flowers are, fortunately, obsolete as parlor decorations, and so are shell flowers, and hair flowers, and feather flowers, and other abnormalities, but now and then one shudders at a preserved funeral or wedding wreath hanging on the wall of a Philistine's parlor, or marvels at a basket of dyed and desiccated immortelles on the mantel of the dining-room. If flowers are used at all, let them suggest the beauty of out-door nature, and that is best done by leaving them, as far as possible, in a state of nature.

C. M. S.